

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 063401

EXDIS ADDEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT FROM AMERICAN EMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN 0676
DTG 221340Z MAR 77 SENT ACTION SECSTATE WASHDC INFO AMERICAN
EMBASSY ABU DHABI EMBASSY DOHA AMERICAN CONSULATE DHAHRAN
EMBASSY JIDDA CONSUL KARACHI EMBASSY ISLAMABAD EMBASSY MUSCAT
EMBASSY NAIROBI EMBASSY PORT LOUIS EMBASSY TEHRAN EMBASSY VICTORIA
EMBASSY KUWAIT

QTE

S E C R E T MANAMA 0676

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MORG, BA

SUBJECT: PRINCIPLE OF NEW FORMAT FOR MIDEASTFOR ACCEPTABLE TO GOB

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REF: MANAMA 649

1. SUMMARY. FOREIGN MINISTER SUMMONED ME MARCH 22 TO INFORM ME
THAT AMIR AND PRIME MINISTER HAVE ACCEPTED CONCEPT OF NEW FORMAT
ALONG LINES WHICH FONMIN AND I HAD DISCUSSED (REFTEL). DECISION
WILL BE PRESENTED TO FULL CABINET MARCH 27; FONMIN EXPECTS
CABINET WILL READILY PUT ITS SEAL OF APPROVAL ON AMIR'S DECISION.

FONMIN SOUGHT CLARIFICATION ON NUMBER OF POINTS. END SUMMARY.

2. FONMIN SUMMONED ME MARCH 22 TO INFORM ME OF RESULTS MARCH 21 MEETING REPORTED MANAMA 659 (NOTAL). BASED ON IDEAS FONMIN AND I HAVE DISCUSSED, PARTICULARLY THOSE DESCRIBED REFTEL, FONMIN SAID HE, AMIR, AND PRIME MINISTER HAD CONSIDERED THREE OPTIONS DURING THEIR MARCH 21 MEETING: KEEP NAVY AS IT IS, HAVE IT WITHDRAW COMPLETELY, OR ACCEPT NEW ARRANGEMENT ALONG LINES HE AND I HAD DEVELOPED OVER RECENT MONTHS. FONMIN SAID THEY HAD LITTLE TROUBLE CHOOSING NEW ARRANGEMENT. BAHRAIN VALUES ITS TIES WITH USG, AND IS STRONGLY SUPPORTIVE OF US ROLE IN REGION, AND IS PLEASED THAT WAY CAN BE FOUND TO MAINTAIN THOSE TIES, AND SUPPORT AREA INTERESTS, AND AT SAME TIME RELIEVE BAHRAIN OF "IMPERIALIST BASE" IMAGE. HE SAID DECISION WOULD BE PUT BEFORE FULL CABINET AT REGULAR SESSION MARCH 27; HE SAID HE EXPECTED CABINET WOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE GIVING ITS APPROVAL TO DECISION MADE BY AMIR AND PRIME MINISTER.

3. FONMIN SAID THERE WILL BE MANY DETAILS FOR HIM AND ME TO WORK OUT OVER COMING WEEKS -- AND HE RECALLED THAT IDEAS WE HAD DISCUSSED REMAIN SUBJECT TO USG APPROVAL -- BUT HE WANTED TO GET SOME ITEMS CLEARED UP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE:

(A) SEVENTY-FIVE PERSONNEL, WITH FAMILIES, TO REMAIN AFTER DE-HOMEPORTING. WAS FONMIN CORRECT IN TELLING AMIR THAT THIS FIGURE DOES NOT INCLUDE SCHOOL STAFF? I CONFIRMED THAT THEY ARE ADDITIONAL TO SCHOOL STAFF. FONMIN SAID FINE, HE JUST WANTED TO BE SURE HE HAD NOT MISINFORMED AMIR.

(B) DOES NAVY WISH TO KEEP ITS AIRCRAFT HERE AFTER DE-HOMEPORTING? I SAID IT DID BECAUSE LOCATION IS RELATIVELY CENTRAL
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TO OPERATING AREA AND SERVICES ARE GOOD. FONMIN MADE NOTE BUT DID NOT OTHERWISE RESPOND.

(C) LEGAL SITUATION. FONMIN SAID HE HATED THOUGHT OF GETTING DEEPLY INVOLVED WITH GOB LEGAL ADVISER (AN EXPERT HAIR-SPLITTER) ON WAYS TO COVER NEW ARRANGEMENT. HE WANTED TO KNOW ASAP IF EXCHANGE OF NOTES WE HAD DISCUSSED (PARA 5 REFTEL) WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO USG AS WAY OF HANDLING ALL ELEMENTS OF NEW ARRANGEMENT. WOULD USG NEED TO TELL CONGRESS, OR SEEK ITS APPROVAL FOR NEW ARRANGEMENT? I SAID I WOULD SEEK ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS ON URGENT BASIS.

(D) DURATION. FONMIN SAID HE FELT A SHORT PERIOD WAS NOT WORTH IT, JUST AS IT IS NOT WORTH IT TO HAVE DOD RUN SCHOOL ONLY FOR YEAR OR SO. HE SUGGESTED OPEN-ENDED ARRANGEMENT SUBJECT TO REVIEW EVERY TWO YEARS. I SAID I WOULD REPORT HIS VIEW.

(E) RENT. FONMIN STRESSED THAT QUESTION OF RENT IS MINOR, OF NO INTEREST TO HIM, BUT EVEN MINOR QUESTIONS MUST BE ANSWERED. I AGREED AND SAID THAT WHILE I HAD NOT GIVEN IT MUCH THOUGHT EITHER, I SUPPOSED USG WOULD WANT TO REDUCE IT IN LINE WITH REDUCED PRESENCE. FONMIN AGREED THAT THIS WAS LIKELY AND

THAT HE AND I COULD WORK IT OUT LATER.

(F) PORT TIME. FONMIN SAID NAVY ACCESS FOUR MONTHS A YEAR WAS AGREEABLE. I SAID I FELT NAVY WOULD NOT NEED MORE THAN THAT BUT, AS I HAD SAID EARLIER, IT WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MORE ASSURED ACCESS TIME "JUST IN CASE". HE SAID WE COULD TALK ABOUT IT LATER WHEN WE GET MORE DEEPLY INTO DETAILS.

(G) AUSPICES. FONMIN EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN OVER NATURE AND IMAGE OF NAVY PRESENCE HERE AFTER DE-HOMEPORTING. AS HE EXPLAINED HIS CONCERN HE REACHED POINT DESCRIBED PARA 2(D) OF STATE 061525: "NO OSTENSIBLE LINK WITH MIDEASTFOR COMMAND". HE SAID HE WOULD PREFER POST DE-HOMEPORTING ARRANGEMENTS TO BE TIED AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE TO DOD SCHOOL. I SAID I WAS NOT SURE SCHOOL COULD PROVIDE FULL RATIONALE (HAVING IN MIND BUDGETARY AND OTHER PRESENTATIONS TO CONGRESS) BUT THAT I FELT SOMETHING COULD BE WORKED OUT. IN THIS REGARD. DEPT MIGHT WISH TO EXPLORE WITH DOD POSSIBILITY OF PUTTING RESIDUAL PRESENCE HERE UNDER, SAY, USMTM AUSPICES.

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(H) COMMUNICATIONS. FONMIN ASKED IF NAVY WANTED TO KEEP ANTENNA FIELD AT JUFAIR. I SAID IT DID NOT SINCE NAVY REALLY DID NOT NEED IT TO MAINTAIN ITS COMMUNICATIONS. NAVY HAS NOT NEEDED THIS FIELD FOR SOME TIME AND IT IS, IN ANY CASE, DESTINED TO BE COVERED BY RECLAMATION PROJECT.

4. AFTER DECISION IN FAVOR OF NEW FORMAT, MEETING WITH FONMIN WAS MOST NOTABLE FOR WHAT WAS NOT DISCUSSED. FONMIN AGAIN MADE NO MENTION OF QUID PRO QUO IN SECURITY ASSISTANCE OR ANY OTHER AREA. NOR DID HE ASK WHAT OTHERS MIGHT DO FOR NAVY. HE DID NOT MENTION ANY REDUCTION WHATEVER IN NAVY USE OF JUFAIR COMPOUND. BEYOND CURIOSITY ABOUT ANTENNA FIELD HE DID NOT MENTION NAVY COMMUNICATIONS, WHICH PREVIOUSLY HAD BEEN A SOMEWHAT TOUCHY POINT (MANAMA 244 - NOTAL. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT FONMIN DID NOT RAISE COMMUNICATIONS QUESTION IN MORE DETAIL SIMPLY BECAUSE HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND IT. WHILE IT MAY WELL BE THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO KEEP PRESENT COMMUNICATIONS SET-UP TOTALLY IN PLACE, I FEEL IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO KEEP MOVING, AS DOD IS DOING, ON ALTERNATIVE FACILITIES FOR CHUSMTM.

5. OUR BASIC APPROACH TO GOB, WORKED OUT OVER PAST FEW MONTHS, HAS WORKED AND TASK NOW IS TO NAIL DOWN THE DETAILS, SOME OF WHICH, SUCH AS THE "LEGAL SITUATION" AND "AUSPICES" DESCRIBED ABOVE, ARE MAJOR AND COULD STILL DERAIL US. FONMIN CLEARLY WANTS TO MAKE MUCH OF THE DE-HOMEPORTING ASPECT, INCLUDING, HE SAID, SOME KIND OF CEREMONY IN JUNE, AND TO HANDLE THE POST DE-HOMEPORTING ARRANGEMENT IN AS LOW-KEY AND INVISIBLE MANNER AS POSSIBLE. IN HIS MIND THE SCHOOL IS IMPORTANT NOT ONLY FOR ITSELF BUT AS COVER FOR OUR CONTINUING MILITARY PRESENCE HERE. WHILE I APPRECIATE PROBLEM SCHOOL HAS GIVEN DOD, I WOULD HOPE WE CAN NOW ACCEPT THAT DOD SHOULD RUN ENTIRE SCHOOL FOR AT LEAST FIRST TWO

YEARS OF NEW MIDEASTFOR FORMAT.

6. NEXT STEPS. FONMIN SAID HE AND I SHOULD BEGIN TO WORK OUT DETAILS SOON AFTER MARCH 27 CABINET MEETING. I HAVE ASKED ADMIRAL CROWE TO RETURN TO BAHRAIN FROM JORDAN TO BE ON HAND AS SECRET

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WE WORK OUT THESE DETAILS. FORMAL USG ACCEPTANCE OF CONCEPT, AND OF AS MANY DETAILS AS POSSIBLE, SHOULD BE FORTHCOMING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AS SHOULD ANSWERS TO FONMIN'S QUESTIONS POSED ABOVE. QUESTION OF DE FACTO EXTENSION OF AT LEAST SOME OF PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS IS ONE I WILL, FIRST, WORK OUT WITH ADMIRAL CROWE AND THEN, WITH DEPT APPROVAL, RAISE WITH FONMIN.

7. PUBLIC POSTURE. AS NOTED MANAMA 659 (NOTAL) RUMOR THAT NAVY WILL STAY IS COMMON HERE AND, FOLLOWING MARCH 27 CABINET MEETING AT LATEST, DECISION TO THIS EFFECT WILL BE WIDELY KNOWN. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE CONSIDER URGENTLY OUR PUBLIC POSTURE ON THIS. SINCE A CREDIBLE DE-HOMEPORTING HAS BEEN KEY TO GOB ACCEPTANCE OF NEW FORMAT, IT IS NECESSARY THAT OUR, AND GOB'S, PUBLIC STATEMENTS FIT THIS IMAGE. REQUEST DEPT. CONSIDER APPROACH I OUTLINED MOST RECENTLY IN PARA 4 MANAMA 577 (NOTAL) IN WHICH GOB AND USG WOULD JOINTLY ANNOUNCE TERMINATION OF STATIONING AGREEMENT AND ESTABLISHMENT OF MIDEASTFOR AS AFLOAT COMMAND. WHILE SUCH ANNOUNCEMENT SHOULD BE DELAYED AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, IDEALLY UNTIL JUNE, WE WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO USE IT SOONER. IN ANY CASE WE WILL NEED INTERIM GUIDANCE WHICH, IF DEPT. AGREES, COULD BE SIMPLY PRESENT GUIDANCE THAT DISCUSSIONS ARE CONTINUING.

8. I WILL PRESENT FURTHER THOUGHTS TO DEPT OVER NEXT FEW DAYS ON DETAILS OF NEW ARRANGEMENT.

9. DEPT. PLEASE PASS TO MILITARY ADDRESSEES INCLUDED STATE 061525. CLUVERIUS UNQTE VANCE

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